



The Island Health Plan
A Business Plan for the Irish Pig Industry

Compiled by the IFA National Pigs and Pig meat Committee

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Background According to InterPig¹, (2012) the Irish pig meat industry was 11c/kg less competitive than the other main exporting countries (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands & France) due to the cost of our location (import of feed), as well as higher health and A.I. costs (0.11c v 0.8c / kg). However our location, on the west of Europe in a less pig dense region could potentially be of benefit to the industry by creating an environment to produce the healthiest pigs in Europe.

The proposal below outlines the structure necessary to allow this to happen.

Animal Health Ireland Initial discussions have been held with Animal Health Ireland (AHI)² who expressed an interest in becoming formally involved with the programme. This relationship would be positive in AHI already have:

- (1) Established knowledge hub with scientific and political credibility,
- (2) Established links with Northern Ireland,
- (3) Established funding structure (DAFM co-funding similar to cattle).

It is envisaged that AHI would be paid a service fee for providing oversight and administrative services to the pig industry to include but not limited to administration of the import protocols, maintenance of the national screening, development of control & eradication programmes and conduit services between the factories, TVI's, farmers, PVPs, Teagasc and other stakeholders as required.

Import Protocols As a first line of defence, following the outbreak of PRRS in 2013, The National Pig Health Council (NPHC) voluntary protocols³ were reviewed with an additional protocol added in 2013 'Semen for National Sale'. These protocols however remain voluntary and the proposal is to include them under the criteria of the Bord Bia Pigmeat Quality Assurance Scheme.

Ante-mortem inspection It is a legal obligation as part of Food Chain Information (FCI) for the DAFM to provide feedback to farmers on ante-mortem inspections. The DAFM are at a reasonably advanced stage of developing the software necessary for this feedback to be delivered for the cattle ante-mortem inspections; however the pig screening is still some time away.

This is a critical element of the plan which is recognised by DAFM. Agreement between factories and the DAFM on the most effective way to roll this out is required.

National Screening There are a number of elements to the National Screening which would be conducted at factory level:

1. A national screening programme would generate an initial health profile for the country as well as creating an 'early warning system' for new disease.
2. Introduction of a system to feedback information from the kill line to farmers not

¹ Global network for the exchange of comparable farm level pig costs of production data. Interpig.org

² AHI aims to establish effective control programmes for non-regulated diseases of livestock. www.animalhealthireland.ie

³ Protocols are in place for (1) Live animals (2) imported fresh semen (3) imported frozen semen (4) semen produced & supplied on the Island

covered by FCI thus enabling farmers to explore what additional control measures could be taken at farm level.

3. In time options for regional and/or island eradication of disease.

Funding

For the industry to introduce comprehensive and sustainable health initiatives a level of funding is required. It is proposed that a 'Pig Industry Development Levy' is collected from all farmers and factories at a level of 3.5c/pig each (7c/pig total) giving a total industry contribution annually of €245,000. Approximately 5c/pig would be devoted to pig health (€175,000) with the other 2c/pig (€65,000) held for research and development projects. This fund would be administered by representatives of the factories and farmers contributing.

It is vital that all factories and farmers invest in the programme to ensure its success.

Industry Role

This funding would firstly facilitate the employment of a suitably qualified person to work on the 'Pig Health Plan' full time. That person would take their instruction and direction from a voluntary industry led working group. It is proposed that the National Pig Health Council which is representative of all elements of the industry would fill this role.

Summary

Improving the health of our national pig herd through the implementation of this plan would:

- build a long term performance advantage over our competitors which would have significant farm and factory benefits,
- protect the island from new disease
- create a marketable image in international markets,

However the time for action on this is now.